



MUMBAI

American Center ★★★★★ Bulletin

AUGUST

2008

WORLD YOUTH DAY

BY MICHAEL KIBBE

International Youth Day, established December 17, 1999, by the General Assembly of the United Nations to promote awareness of the *World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond*, calls for full participation of youth in the shaping of society. We honor this day by reflecting on the contributions of youth past, who helped form a new world, and on youth present, who will help orchestrate the future.

Our youth, that exciting decade between the ages of 16 and 26, is filled with dreams of a better life through education, job opportunities, and relationships. It is the transition from being seen as young by community elders to being acknowledged as an adult. It is a time filled with personal and professional challenges requiring skills (not yet fully mastered) that are sharpened each day through a desire to succeed. It is also a time when life can be filled with unyielding passion for learning, loving, hoping, and acting. This passion is a positive force that changes societies from the inside out.

An examination of the lives of some of America's founding fathers demonstrates the positive role youth can have on society. Benjamin Franklin, at the young age of 22, organized 12 of his friends into a group known as the Junto Society, an organization dedicated to mutual improvement. He and the other members gathered weekly to discuss politics, Greek history, science, and philosophy in an effort to reshape their world views. Franklin hoped to use lessons learned during the Junto meetings to improve American society and, to his and the other members' credit, Junto introduced institutional and societal changes lasting to this very day in the United States: the first library, the first public hospital, a voluntary fire department and the University of Pennsylvania, among others.

Key in the founding of America and defender of the U.S. Constitution prior to its ratification, Alexander Hamilton is a celebrated revolutionist. The son of a trader in the West Indies, and orphaned by the age of 14, Hamilton was sent to America by relatives and friends to receive a formal education. While in his early twenties, ideas for revolution against the British were sweeping through the colonies. With unabated zeal for the new society, Hamilton devoted his time to speaking and writing in support of the revolutionary movement. His published essays helped frame the case against the British taxation system on the American tea trade, and helped gather support among the colonists for independence.

These young men lived in a special time in world history, but contributions from younger generations to their societies are not rare or isolated occurrences. Unfortunately, it is not possible to include all who have spurred change, but I would be remiss to exclude mention of those at the heart of the counter-culture phenomenon of the 1960s.

During his inaugural address on a cold Friday in January 1961, President John F. Kennedy acknowledged the unique exuberance and power of youth by declaring the young have a responsibility to participate in the protection and progression of society. "Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans ... so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country." President Kennedy invited young Americans to take hold of the responsibility of caring for American society as previous generations had by challenging them to embrace their power - to do their part. The baby boom generation, as they were called, answered by becoming some of the most active citizens in modern history. This generation of Americans, while in their teens and twenties, effectively challenged the norms of their society. They channeled their passions into organizations, protests, essays, and speeches, helping end a war and usher in a new era of civil rights in the United States. Their impact has permeated American life to this day.

However, the youth of America are not exclusive in their ability to create major impacts in their time. On April 16, 1989, a group of university students in Beijing, China, began to protest the Communist Party's official response to the death of a longtime party leader. In a few days' time, the protest grew to 10,000 students who staged a sit-in on Tiananmen Square. As news spread about the students' actions, more and more people from all walks of life - factory workers, teachers, elders, and the like - joined the students at Tiananmen Square, calling for democratic reforms to their government. At its peak, the protest, which began with a small group of students, grew to millions across all regions of China. The images of the Chinese government's response are just one part of the story of Tiananmen Square; the legacy of this moment in history is the power of a small group of brave and burdened students who asked their nation to be better. Personifying the desire for more freedom, their valiant efforts led to reforms within the Chinese government

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The American Center

4 New Marine Lines, Mumbai 400 020

Tel: 2262-4590; Fax: 2262-4595

E-mail: MumbaiPublicAffairs@state.gov

Website: <http://mumbai.usconsulate.gov>

Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

(Monday through Friday)

HOLIDAYS

August 15: Independence Day

August 19: Parsi New Year

A WORD FROM THE CENTER

Many drivers in the United States use their car bumpers as a platform for self-expression. One of my favorite bumper stickers of all time is "think globally, act locally." This melds well with Margaret Mead's famous quote: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has." In our increasingly interconnected global world, there is more room than ever for citizens, particularly youth, to make a difference. The main article details some of the many ways that youth have impacted societies around the world. India, with its overwhelmingly young population, is a prime example of what a positive role youth can play in their society. In traveling through western India, I have been fortunate to meet young people from all over our five-state consular district. I have been uniformly impressed by the keen interest they take in the world around them; so many are determined to make a difference in the lives of their communities. With India's young population – some statistics cite that more than half the population is below the age of 25 – it is eminently clear that the future is truly in the hands of India's youth.

C. Dal Bello

Christine Dal Bello
Information Officer

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that are still in existence.

Our contributions to society will not always reach the world stage, but that in no way should dampen our resolve to see change. Action taken at the local community level can be more important to overall changes in societies that can later bleed over into other areas surrounding it. In fact, working in the local community should be where progress begins. Therefore, the first steps to societal changes can and should start at home. Megan Waggoner of Palmer, Alaska, epitomizes this philosophy. Megan, at 16, saw around her the impact of global warming and decided to take action by organizing her friends to help stop climate change by collecting 5000 signatures from others of the same age for a global warming petition presented to U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska. At 13, Rachel Ridge of Holladay, Utah, formed a group known as Get Really Energy Efficient Now (GREEN) and took on smog control in Salt Lake City, Utah, through a campaign to get motorists to turn off their vehicle engines rather than keep them idling. These two girls found a passion, organized their friends, and took action in their backyards.

Today, the Internet and other connected technologies, such as cell phones, make mobilizing people and spreading a message easier than ever before. One person's blog or web site can have a relatively immediate impact on culture and potentially on social change. Since early adopters of newer technology are often the younger generation, young people are finding quicker and more exciting ways to gain press for their causes. By creating web sites, blogs, Facebook or MySpace pages, YouTube videos, and other applications, people are reaching widespread audiences in record time. They have created rapidly mobile and always connected organizations capable of generating press releases or video responses within minutes of an official statement made by a government, business, or nongovernmental organizations. Gone are the days of the "word of mouth" campaign. One person's SMS text, becomes the next person's Facebook quote, which becomes the next person's blog material, which becomes the next person's newspaper column, and so goes the message – like wildfire on an open prairie.

In other words, youth movements have evolved from the small gathering of 12, requiring months or years to effect change, to the ability to reach thousands of people in a matter of minutes. Thus, the speed of thought and action can change a nation as well as the world. Still, even with technology's help, more than thought, it takes action. Without action, Alexander Hamilton might be unknown, recorded only in history as a student who lived during the time of the American Revolution. Without action, the war in Vietnam would have lasted much longer and civil rights would have come much later to the United States. Without action, reforms in the Chinese economy and the Chinese people's liberties would have been slower to change. Without action, GREEN would just be a color. Volunteers and supporters must still be willing to sacrifice their time, money, reputation, and maybe their lives, to serve for a cause. It is this passion to act for the greater good that has led to changes in the world throughout history. All the technology in the world cannot replace the heart of a volunteer. Without volunteers and support, no matter how great the cause, the movement dies. It is the action of one that starts a wave of change. So get involved in the community around you. Start local, think global, and use technology to spread the message. Who knows, your idea might be the next to be recorded in history.

Michael Kibbe is a Political/Economic Intern at the American Consulate General, Mumbai.

INVITATION

The American Center

cordially invites you to

MALHAARS

Indian Classical Ragas of the Rainy Season

by

Jay Thakkar on Flute
accompanied by
Rohan Utpat on Tabla

*in the American Center Auditorium
Thursday, August 28, at 6:00 p.m.*

Jay Thakkar, an Indian classical flutist, trained under Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia. In this concert, Thakkar presents *Malhaars*, a flute recital of monsoon ragas, Indian classical melodies which are embodiments of the boundless joy brought by rains around the globe.

*Admission is strictly on a first-come, first-served basis.
Please be seated by 5:45 p.m.*

The American Corner Celebrates

The heads of which Presidents are carved into Mount Rushmore? What do the stripes on the U.S. flag mean? Test your knowledge of the U.S. by joining the American Corner in Ahmedabad for their KnowUSA quiz on September 8, 2008. This quiz is being held to celebrate the American Corner's fourth anniversary and is open to graduate students in Ahmedabad. For details, please contact: Mukund Patel (Tel: 2630-0452)
E-mail: americancorner@amaindia.org

Meet the 2008 Presidential Candidates

Presumed Republican Nominee



John McCain, currently a senator representing Arizona, would be the oldest president of the United States, if elected. Serving in the Senate since 1986, he is known to have championed legislation that reformed election financing and lobbying laws.

McCain, whose father and grandfather served in the U.S. Navy, had a 22-year naval career. He served in Vietnam, where he was a prisoner of war for more than five years, and received many naval honors for his service. McCain was also a presidential candidate in 2000, but lost the nomination to George W. Bush.

McCain was born August 29, 1936, in the Panama Canal Zone, where his father was serving in the U.S. Navy. He attended the U.S. Naval Academy. McCain's wife, Cindy McCain, has been active in many international humanitarian organizations. He has seven children, including a son who recently returned from serving in Iraq and a daughter adopted from Mother Theresa's orphanage in Bangladesh.

Presumed Democratic Nominee



Barack Obama, a first-term senator from Illinois, would be the first African-American president of the United States, if elected. Serving in the Senate since 2004, Obama introduced bipartisan legislation that allows Americans to learn online how their tax dollars are spent. He also serves on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, which helps oversee the care of soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Previously, Obama worked as a community organizer and civil rights attorney in Chicago, and served for eight years in the Illinois State Senate.

Obama was born August 4, 1961, in Hawaii, and has lived in many places, including Indonesia. His mother was from Kansas and his father from Kenya. Obama attended Columbia University in New York and earned a law degree at Harvard University in Massachusetts. He and his wife, Michelle Obama, who also worked as a lawyer, and later for the University of Chicago, have two young daughters.

A Peek at eJournals



The Bureau of International Information Programs of the U.S. Department of State publishes electronic journals that are monthly collections of articles by U.S. and international experts, in five thematic areas under the *eJournal USA* logo – with a focus on U.S. foreign policy, economics, democracy, global issues and U.S. society and values.

The Next New Thing

January 2008, Volume 13, Number 1

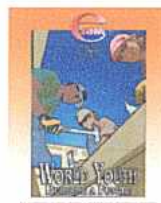


Innovation is the art of creating something new, and everyday in the U.S. and around the world, scientists, students, and everyday people are working to bring to life an idea that is theirs alone. This edition of *eJournal USA* tells the story of innovators and their creations.

<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa.html#0108>

World Youth Building a Future

July 2007, Volume 12, Number 7

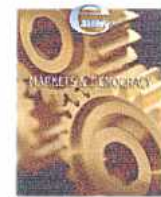


This edition of *eJournal USA* opens a window on the real-life experiences of young people who have left home and family to participate in an international youth exchange program.

<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0707/ijse/ijse0707.htm>

Markets and Democracy

June 2008, Volume 13, Number 6



In this issue, the complex connection between markets and democracy is discussed by 12 international experts by taking up different aspects of the conundrum.

<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa.html>

Upcoming eJournals

July – *National Parks*

August – *Religious Minorities*

September – *The Electoral College*

Copies of the journals may be obtained from the Library.

MUMBAI MONDAYS

A Discussion on The American Automobile Industry: Past to Present led by Ranil Rodrigo

Monday, August 18
American Center Auditorium

6:00 p.m.

Ranil Rodrigo is the spouse of Foreign Service Officer, Meera Doraiswamy. Prior to this tour, Ranil worked as a personnel security investigator for the United States Investigations Service in Washington, D.C. He previously consulted for the U.S. Trade and Development Agency as a project analyst in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia Division. Ranil studied international relations and psychology at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. He is originally from Washington, D.C.

His talk will provide a brief overview of the American automobile industry, focusing on America's original "Big Three" Detroit-based car manufacturers and the progression of American automobile designs and concepts from past to present.

FILMS THIS MONTH

Friday, August 22

Mr. Holland's Opus (1995, color, 143 mins)

Friday, August 29

Good Will Hunting (1997, color, 126 mins)

American Center Auditorium

3:30 and 6:30 p.m.



Oscar-nominated Richard Dreyfuss is Glenn Holland, a man whose ambitions to compose a symphony are superseded by financial obligations that lead him to a job as a high school music teacher. He stays on the job for three decades, facing budget crises, at times unappreciative students and a strained relationship with his wife and hearing-impaired son. With Gleanne Headly, Jay Thomas, Jean Louisa Kelly.

Real-life pals Matt Damon and Ben Affleck took home an Academy Award for their story about Will Hunting (Damon), a janitor at MIT whose sullen nature masks a genius intellect. Affleck costars as his best friend, Minnie Driver is a medical student who falls for Damon, and Best Supporting Actor Oscar-winner Robin Williams is a therapist who tries to help him come to grips with his life. Gus Van Sant directs.



U.S. ELECTIONS 2008

Presidential Candidates on Healthcare Issues

The United States spends more – approximately 16 percent of its gross domestic product – on healthcare than any other nation in the world. Healthcare is one of the major political issues the final two candidates for president will be discussing on the campaign trail. Where do the two main party candidates stand on this issue?

John McCain

For those who do not receive health insurance through their employer, McCain says he will offer \$2500 tax credits to individuals and \$5000 tax credits for families to help make health insurance more affordable. He also seeks to allow Americans to keep their health insurance when switching jobs or moving between states. McCain says healthcare costs can be lowered by encouraging greater competition among providers.

Barack Obama

Obama's healthcare plan would require all children to have health insurance. Obama would require that employers contribute to their employees' health insurance costs. Americans who do not have insurance provided through their employer will have the option to pick from a number of private and government options. To lower healthcare costs, Obama says he would require healthcare providers to publicly report on their expenses.

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Admission to all American Center programs, restricted to persons over 16, will be on a first-come, first-served basis. The auditorium doors will open 30 minutes before the start of the program.